
Host Family and Community Support, Including Disaster Risk Reduction: The Case of Goma

In January 2002, the Nyiragongo volcano erupted near Goma in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, devastating a city of 450,000 people. In less than a day, lava covered 13 percent of the city, or nearly two square miles, and destroyed up to 15,000 houses. Thousands of jobs were lost, and the urban and regional economy was devastated. As part of the international community's response, USAID/OFDA provided nearly \$5 million in assistance, including \$2.6 million for emergency relief and \$2.3 million for transitional shelter and disaster risk reduction (DRR) activities.

USAID/OFDA risk reduction activities included support of the Goma Volcano Observatory (GVO) to improve volcano hazard monitoring (e.g. provision of seismographs and telemetry equipment), train staff and provide technical assistance. Additionally, a two-year, community-based DRR program was supported to enhance early warning systems, upgrade evacuation routes, and improve community awareness of what to do and where to go during eruptions and earthquakes, i.e., to learn to live with their risks.

More than six years after the eruption, the long-term impact of the OFDA-supported projects is visible to varying degrees:

- In 2002, OFDA provided transitional shelter to 5,000 families, which served as the template for the provision of an additional 8,000 transitional shelters by other donors. Over time, these families have transformed their shelter into permanent housing. This has resulted in re-establishment of local markets and communities, and contributed significantly to overall recovery
- **Approximately 75 percent of beneficiary households were assisted on land occupied by host families (relatives or friends); many of these beneficiaries have remained on hosted land**
- GVO volcano monitoring continues, with most of the equipment provided through OFDA programs still functioning, though upgrades are needed, and
- GVO continues many of the same community-based education activities supported earlier by OFDA, such as providing a volcano activity weekly report on local radio stations, sharing information at a local volcano information center, and updating alert levels in public areas.

Incorporation of DRR into the 2002 disaster response aimed to strengthen the resilience of Goma's citizens by lessening the impact of future disasters. A recent assessment found that many of the OFDA-sponsored projects promoted the transition to recovery and reconstruction. However, vigilance will continue to be needed to maintain awareness of the hazards from the many volcanoes in the Goma area.